



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on January 4, 2011

Sen. Graham Wants U.S. in Afghanistan Permanently

The remarks raise the question of what Graham thinks United States can gain from this military adventure, and whether he is as interested in protecting the borders of the United States as he is in protecting the borders from Afghanistan.

Responding to a question from NBC's David Gregory on Sunday, [Graham answered thusly](#):



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I hope we can find an enduring relationship with Afghanistan that will make sure that country never goes back in the hands of terrorists. And the idea of putting permanent military bases on the table in 2011, I think would secure our national interest and tell the bad guys and the good guys we're not leaving, we're staying, in a responsible way if the Afghan people want us to stay. ...

I think it would be enormously beneficial to the region, as well as Afghanistan. We've had air bases all over the world. A couple of air bases in Afghanistan would allow the Afghan security forces an edge against the Taliban in perpetuity. It would be a signal to Pakistan that the Taliban are never going to come back in Afghanistan. They could change their behavior. It would be a signal to the whole region that Afghanistan is going to be a new and different place. And if the Afghan people want this relationship, they're going to have to earn it. But I hope they will seek a relationship with the United States of where we can have an enduring relationship, economic and militarily and politically. And a couple of air bases in Afghanistan will give us an edge militarily, give the Afghan security forces an edge militarily, to ensure that country never goes back into the hands of the Taliban, which would be a stabilizing event throughout the whole region. That has to be earned by the Afghan people, and it has to be requested by them.

Regardless of Mr. Graham's earnest concern for the benighted Afghans, he might learn something about what the United States can gain from this military "presence" by watching [Sebastian Junger's](#) documentary called "[Restrepo](#)." Junger and a colleague spent a year with the a platoon of the Army's [503rd Infantry Regiment \(airborne\)](#) of the [173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team](#). It was stationed in Afghanistan's [Korengal Valley](#) in the Hindu Kush, known to American fighting men as "[The Valley of Death](#)." The documentary takes its name from a medic killed during filming. Korengal was also the scene of then Staff Sgt. [Sal Giunta's heroic feats](#) that made him the first living recipient of the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War.

[Restrepo's](#) panoramic vistas of the Korengal alone tell a viewer the United States has nothing to gain



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from its expedition in Afghanistan. Its depiction of Americans troops fighting an invisible enemy, supposedly with the help of suspicious and reluctant Islamic tribesman, drives the point home. The great victory depicted in “Restrepo” is that most of the Americans Junger filmed returned home alive. They fought to no avail, and their intercourse with the indigenous residents should invite even the most optimistic supporter of the war to wonder why in heaven’s name this country is sending the flower to its youth to die there. Such was the fighting in the Korengal Valley that the U.S. military, having sustained more than 40 men killed in action and hundreds wounded, [abandoned](#) the area last April.

As for Afghanistan generally, American families have suffered more than 1,400 dead, almost all of them killed in action. The United States cannot declare victory. The Obama administration has announced plans to abandon the military effort. “We’re going to be totally out of there, come hell or high water, by 2014,” Vice President Joe Biden [said](#) in December.

But perhaps Graham is more interested in the keeping the Taliban out of Afghanistan than in keeping Mexicans and others from entering the United States illegally.

Last March, Graham joined leftist Sen. [Charles Schumer](#), of New York, in proposing an “immigration reform” bill that would have opened citizenship to the more than 10 millions illegal aliens now here. President Obama [quickly offered](#) his full-throated support for the measure, which would have leapt beyond legalizing those millions to offering educational and employment incentives to even more immigrants. [It was](#), in a word, [an amnesty](#). Indeed, it was worse. It was amnesty on steroids.

Happily, [that bill died](#). So Graham [wants to](#) station American troops permanently in Afghanistan to keep the Taliban from crossing its borders. Americans want to know what his plan is to stop Mexicans from crossing theirs.

Photo: Sen. Lindsey Graham



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